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Love: The Essence of Life

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LOVE: THE ESSENCE OF LIFE

BY

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OUACHITA BAPTIST COLLEGE

Honors Seminar Paper # 16

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O U T L I N E

- I. Christianity is love
 - A. Love is the greatest of all.
 - B. Love is the crowning glory of Christian Character.
- II. God is love.
 - A. God created man in love.
 - B. God saved man through love.
 - 1. Christ's coming is the greatest manifestation of love.
 - 2. Christ's life is the greatest example of love.
 - C. God preserves man by love.
- III. Love is life.
 - A. Love is the greatest commandment.
 - B. Love is the greatest life.

Christianity is different from all other religions, for
Christianity affects, appeals to , and governs the heart.¹ Why?
Christianity is love.

I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may dole out all I possess, or even give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, I am none the better. Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one, Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.

Love will never come to an end. Are there prophets? their work will be over. Are there tongues of ecstasy? they will cease. Is there knowledge? it will vanish away; for our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial, and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes. When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things. Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me. In a word, there are three things that last for ever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love. (I Corinthians 13)

It is not enough for man to see through and understand all things; it is not enough for man to know and comprehend, to move and to rule. Man must have love before any of these.² Love is opposed to envy, jealousy, pride, haughtiness, injustice, evil

¹James Hastings, The Great Texts of the Bible James to Jude (London: Waverly Book Co., 1912), p. 313.

²A. A. Van Ruler, The Greatest of These Is Love, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 19), p. 313.

thoughts, wrong desires, unkind and ungenerous words, sharp and offensive acts. Love thinks no evil, wishes no harm, does no wrong.¹ In the entire chapter Paul contends that love is the highest and most real thing in human life and in man's relation to God.² Hastings says, "Love is the chief of the Christian graces. It is the keystone of the arch which gives beauty and symmetry and preminence to the others. It is the crowning glory of the Christian character, the essential element of Christian perfectness, the highest exhibition of Christian excellence."³ Love is a joyful reality, a gift which comes into our lives from above and from which we live.⁴

Love is the great motive power of the Divine Being.⁵

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another. Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another; his love is brought to perfection within us. (I John 4:7-12)

Love has its origin in God⁶ and is the central emotion in God,⁷ for God is love. "This is the first fact in the universe—first in time and first in significance."⁸

¹Hastings, p. 320.

²Van Ruler, p. 81.

³Hastings, p. 320.

⁴Van Ruler, p. 10.

⁵Hastings, p. 330.

⁶William Barclay, The Letters of John and Jude, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 115.

⁷Hastings, p. 330.

⁸ibid.

God is the author and creator of all things and God made love as the basis for everything that has been, is, or ever will be created. "Love is the explanation of creation, for love, to be love, must have someone to love and someone to love it."¹ Love implies fellowship—it cannot exist without an object.² Love built heaven, love made earth, love created man. Therefore, God, in his love, created man. He made man with intelligence, a will, rational affection, and a moral nature.³ In this, the soul of man, He exemplified love by one: giving man the ability to make choices. Love is the explanation of free-will. "Love is of necessity the free choice and the free response of the heart."⁴ God allows man the free choice of God or Satan, of love or hate, of light or darkness. God illustrated love by two: giving man the ability to love. We love Him, because He first loved us.

The love of God in Christ to us, is the motive of our love. Love gives life to all things.⁵ "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Love is the basis for salvation. "God is love, for He seeks and saves the lost." It was in Christ, the gift of love, that love reached its full manifestation.⁶ It is in Christ that God's love is demonstrated. Man is saved through the love of God. It is not for man to know why nor how that this was accomplished, only for

¹Barclay, p. 117.

²Hastings, p. 331

³W. T. Conner, Christian Doctrine, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1937), p. 16.

⁴Barclay, p. 117

⁵Van Ruler, p. 11.

⁶Hastings, p. 335.

him to love, since it is by love that God is known.¹ "Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "Love covereth all sins." (Prov. 10:12) There is only one way to maintain our humanity and to be saved as man—to live and to die in the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.² Christ fulfilled the law by putting love in the heart and fulfilled the prophets by establishing a community based on love.³

The love of God, illustrated through creation and salvation, and the love of man are inseparable parts of the same experience.⁴ For this reason, Christ gave the two positive commandments of love:

He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind." That is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Everything in the Law and the prophets hangs on these two commandments.

Love is the one thing which enables us to make progress in the spiritual life, for if God is love, and if the new commandment of Christ is love, then love is the one thing which brings one nearer to God and nearer to his neighbor.⁵ Love is the inmost quality of a Christian, the inevitable manifestation to his fellowmen of what the Father is to him.⁶ The love of God in Christ to us is the motive of our love to one another and it is in the love of God that one discovers his fellowman. The congregation of Jesus lives in and through the love of God manifested in Christ.⁷ There is no other way.

¹Barclay, p. 115.

²Van Ruler, p. 85.

³W. D. Hyde, The Five Great Philosophies of Life, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1956), p. 219.

⁴Barclay, p. 120

⁵*ibid.* p. 57

⁶Hyde, p. 266.

⁷Van Ruler, p. 10.

Love is the perfect way of life,¹ for love is life.² All men desire to live. Every human on this earth is seeking to live. No one wants to exist--everyone wants to live. However, only a few have realized that love is the substance, the heart, and the essence of life.³ Many are searching for faith, for hope, for mercy, for love. Humanity has yet to realize that love is the parent of joy, justice, mercy, patience, forbearance, humility, meekness.⁴ Love is kind, gentle, and peaceable; considerate of the good of others, forbearing to their faults, forgiving their injuries, casting the mantle of charity over their infirmities; it promotes their welfare and does them all the good which it is in its powers to render.⁵ Humanity has yet to believe that love contains faith, possesses within itself all conceivable, all possible, and all real faith.⁶ Love contains joy, for the "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (I Cor. 2:9) Belief and love comprise the heart of the gospel.⁷ In the gospel, one finds that love endures all, bears all things, and suffereth long, for Christ is love.

Therefore, the ground of love is God. The inspiration of love is Christ. While the activity of love is advancement.⁸ "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

¹ibid. p. 93.

²Alexander Ross, The Epistles of James and John, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 189.

³Van Ruler, p. 108

⁴Hastings, p. 318.

⁵ibid. p. 320.

⁶Van Ruler, p. 69.

⁷G. A. Buttrich, The Interpreters Bible, (New York: Alingdon Press, 1957), p. 416.

⁸Ross, p. 201-205

"They shall prosper that love thee." (Psalms 122:6) Finally,

"Let them that love thy name be joyful." (Psalms 5:11)

The world is created, preserved, and saved by love. God is the author and creator of all things—even love. Christ is the supreme manifestation of love. Man is the recipient and in turn the reflector of love. God through Christ is the source of the light—the love—that man like a mirror reflects. The more that man reflects this love, the happier, the greater, the nearer to God that man will be.

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